

Serial No. 10/673,690
Amendment Dated July 30, 2004
Reply to Office Action of July 7, 2004

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-21 were pending in the present application before the amendment as set forth above. By this Amendment, claims 8, 9, and 18 are amended, and claims 1-7, and 11-17 are canceled.

The July 7, 2004 Office Action rejected claims 1-7 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 6,217,383 to Holland et al. (hereinafter "Holland") in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,210,222 to Langham et al., claims 11-14 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 6,089,913 to Holliday (hereinafter "Holliday"), and claims 15-16 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Holliday in view of Holland.

However, the Examiner stated that "claims 20-21 are allowed" and "claims 8, 9, 10 and 18-19 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims."

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's careful review of the application, allowance of claims 20 and 21 and indication of allowability of claims 8-10, 18 and 19.

In response, as set forth above, claims 8 and 9 have been rewritten, according to the Examiner's suggestions, in the independent form that includes all of the limitation of the base claim, now canceled claim 1, respectively, which makes amended claims 8 and 9 allowable, as indicated by the Examiner in the July 7, 2004 Office Action. Furthermore, claim 10, which is dependent from now amended allowable claim 9, is allowable. Claim 18 has been rewritten, according to the Examiner's suggestions, in the independent form that includes all of the limitation of the base claim, now canceled claim 11, which makes amended claim 18 allowable, as indicated by the Examiner in the July 7, 2004 Office Action. Therefore, claim 19, which is dependent from now amended allowable claim 18, is allowable.

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The specification has been also amended for better form so that the amended claims, the written description and the drawings are consistent with each other. Specifically, in paragraph from page 2, line 22-30 the term "tuber" has been replaced by "tube", to correct a typo. In the paragraph from page 10, line 23-31, to page 11, lines 1-5, reference numbers "110" and "130" have been replaced by "210" and "230", respectively, and "d₁" has been replaced by "D₁", to correct typos.

Additionally, without acquiescing in the propriety of the Examiner's rejections and to facilitate the prosecution of the current application, claims 1-7 and 11-17 have been canceled, which makes the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) to claims 1-7 and 11-17 moot. Applicant reserves every right in cancelled claims 1-7 and 11-17 to file continuation applications.

Applicant asserts that no new matter is added. However, the claims are not limited to the disclosed embodiments.

Any amendments to the claims not specifically referred to herein as being included for the purpose of distinguishing the claims from cited references are included for the purpose of clarification, consistence and/or grammatical/spelling correction only.

It is now believed that the application is in condition for allowance and such allowance is respectfully requested.

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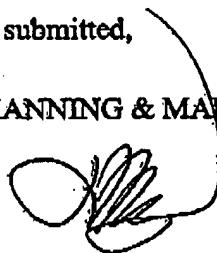
CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the foregoing Amendment and Response place this application in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes that there are any issues that can be resolved by a telephone conference, or that there are any informalities that can be corrected by an Examiner's amendment, please call the undersigned at 404.495.3678.

Respectfully submitted,

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